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Special Issue

Fundamental Policy for Evangelism in Japan.

After the end of the war many opportunities were found for evangelism. Attendance at churches increased and congregations grew. How to take advantage of these opportunities and what kinds of evangelism would be most effective were two of the biggest problems in the Japanese churches.

In March, 1950, at the general meeting of the NCC, it was decided to organize a special committee to work out a fundamental policy for evangelism in Japan. For the last 2 years the committee, divided into 4 different sections, has been studying and preparing a report on a basic policy for evangelism.

The report, which is written in Japanese, contains much good material with statistics showing actual conditions in the Japanese church. The policy for evangelism is founded on these findings. The following is its introduction.

FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGIC POLICIES for THE EVANGELIZATION OF JAPAN

I. Introduction to the Summary Statement

In order to discover the Strategic Policies for the Evangelization of Japan under the radically changed social conditions of the post-war period, we have tried to collect source materials and presented the reports and recommendations derived from this factual data as dealt within the foregoing chapters, and now offer an appraisal of over-all policies we reaffirm what we have presented in the form of a summarized conclusion.

We realize that the survey and research work to find the strategic policies for the evangelization of Japan naturally met with many complicated and varied problems. Therefore it is inevitable that there is some over-lapping or repetition under different items. Japan passed through a revolution in the Meiji Era and experienced a radical change in her history ushering in the new age by abolishing the feudalistic social system and adopting the western system. However, as she ignored the spiritual culture which lies at the foundation of Western civilization and left the root of the feudalistic thought deeply imbedded in the heart of her people, it served as the breeding ground of nationalism, and militarism, and thus at last induced her people to undertake World War II.

Defeated, the nation was thrown into a miserable condition. The people found that all the moral pillars which had supported them were

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completely destroyed and the authoritative leadership entirely torn down, and they were in the midst of great confusion and tumult not knowing where to go.

At this period of revolutionary change in the history of this country, the evangelization of Japan means none other than to strengthen the moral backbone of the life of the nation with the fundamental truth of the Christian gospel.

The moral degeneration of present day Japan which is caused by the poisonous disease of the spinal cord of the national body can never be cured by the medicine of the old religions or moral teachings. Therefore we have determined to establish the strategic policies for evangelism, standing on the firm belief that the Christian gospel is the only means to save the life of the nation.

Meanwhile we realize that those who wish to get results by injecting an excellent medicine must, first of all, examine the condition of the patient, and investigate the inherited physical nature and present environment and must make a most careful study before giving the proper treatment. This is the reason why we had to make intensive and extensive research taking into consideration all the problems concerned in the light of the factual data, before we determined the fundamental evangelistic policies. We had to study the background of the traditional culture and the national characteristics formed by its influence, and the social environment which affected the national spirit, especially the rapid, radical social revolution of the post-war period.

Under such a general plan, when we explore all of our present social conditions and the trends of our Christian Churches, in the midst of it, we shall be able clearly to re-examine our past history to get some suggestions as to the true course to be taken at present and in the future. This is the main purpose of our survey and study and recommendation of the Strategic Policies for the Evangelization of Japan.

In the development of modern industry, Japan has taken similar steps with the Western World. However, in recent years a mass society has developed in Japan and there has been an ever increasing tendency to use the power of the masses in public life. Thus now that democracy has been strongly emphasized, the thought of the people has been increasingly controlled by a concept of democracy without God.

Meanwhile, our Japanese Christianity had hitherto been gaining ground among the intelligent classes and had the characteristics of establishing a self governing status among the middle classes but it is true that we had not succeeded in making contact with the general public. We must admit that this may be interpreted as a success as well as a failure.

Because of these characteristic, Japanese Christianity has shown its strong leadership in all phases of national and social affairs. Meantime, it has to deplore a kind of minority complex, but in the present transition period the social conditions are such that the influence of numbers is very strong.

In view of this situation, it becomes clear that evangelistic policies must always be centered around two focal points, namely;

First, to so emphasize the Christian spirit that it may serve as the guiding principle in industry, arts etc., in order to develop strong leadership in harmony with historical characteristics.

Secondly, The Christian gospel should be so emphasized that its influence may permeate especially the laboring class and the



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farmers which comprise the major part of the population. In this concluding chapter, we shall once again appraise all the reports and recommendations mentioned in the foregoing chapters by reinvestigation and rehearsal.

II. The Historical Background of the Hindrances in the Evangelization of Japan

(1) The fact that anti-Christian national sentiment is deeply imbedded in the hearts or the subconsciousness of our people, since Catholic Christianity was prohibited and rejected in the middle ages as an evil religion of foreign countries.

(2) With the rise of nationalism this anti-Christian movement was fostered by the nationalistic education.

(3) The three religions Buddhism, Shintoism and Confucianism are firmly grounded in the hearts of the general public as a traditional hidden power forming the ground of community life, and the feudalistic family system stands opposed to the Christian religion.

(4) The secularization of the old religions shown in the degradation of religionists caused the national psychology to look down on all religions with contempt, and that is especially so among the younger generation.

(5) The fact that there exists a sharp distinction between the ethnic, pantheistic and secular nature of Japanese culture and the absolute, ethical, monotheistic view of God, which can not be compromised.

(6) Entirely different from the Western community where people generally accept the authority of the Church or Bible, the Japanese community has no basis for recognizing such religious authority, which makes it very difficult to propagate the Christian religion.

(7) At one time in the Meiji Era the Christian religion was greatly welcomed, but later there came a reactionary period, just so, now at the close of World War II, the Japanese nation is passing through a social transition from atrophy to confusion, experiencing unrest in its thought life, and as though they have confused the Western civilization with Christianity as such; they once thronged to the doors of Christian Churches, but now there is gradually coming a period of reaction, already the tendency to estrangement is clearly seen.

(8) The fact that there is a general trend toward indulging in superstitions influenced by the new religions or pseudo-religions and from the lack of religious culture.

(9) The fact that there were among the new missionaries who came in after the close of the war with missionary purpose and zeal some who did not heed the national characteristics arising from the nature of the nation, customs, manners and traditions and thus stimulated the anti-Christian feeling and produced stumbling blocks. Again from lack of a understanding of the autonomy of our Japanese churches, some took such attitudes as to ignore the standpoint of the indigenous churches thus hindering full cooperation for evangelism.

(10) The fact that the traditional policy of Christian evangelism lacks in establishing contact with mass society, and the Christian vocabulary is difficult for the general public to understand. The hindrances above mentioned might be overcome by adopting wiser evangelistic policies.

(note) As to the Church's and the Biblical message for the evangelization of a nation with such peculiar characteristics there is a pamphlet published as the report to the World Council of Churches, drafted as an answer to the inquiry of that Study Departments, which might be used as suggestive materials with regard to this problem.

III. With regard to the Evangelistic Policies based on the Concept of World

Along the line of the ecumenical movement, upholding the final objective of world evangelization, how is our Japanese Christian Church to accomplish its mission in this field? In order to achieve the purpose, we should discover the best policies with regard to two phases of evangelism; namely Home Missions and Foreign Missions as a link in the chain of the program of World Missions.

World evangelism was the last message of our common Lord and is the common task of all the Churches of various nations. We must rise above the nationalistic Churches status, and reject narrow isolation, taking the wider view of the Christian religion and we should investigate the evangelistic policies at home and overseas.

(1) Japanese Christian Churches have developed into the present stage, as the result of the work of Foreign Missions which contributed much in personnel and funds ever since the opening of missions in this country. Naturally there is, to our regret, a traditional sentiment still want to depend upon foreign contributions. However, we feel that we must gradually develop into self-governing agencies and endeavor to establish real cooperation. We take it that we have now reached that stage. There is no need to raise the question as to whether we need the work of the Foreign Missionaries here in Japan as a field of world Missions. That is to say, the evangelization of Japan at the present stage, can be carried on most effectively through the cooperation of our Churches with Foreign Mission Boards. However, care should be taken in appointing Missionaries, to send only such persons as can understand and appreciate the Characteristics of our people, their culture, and the general social trend, in applying practical measures and systems.

Certainly those Missionaries who will render the most efficient service should be:

(a) Missionaries of the type of an "Ambassador of Christ" who would be able to contribute social and personal influence with culture and experience.

(b) Missionaries equipped with certain special technical training, for instance, in educational work, literature evangelism, rural evangelism, medical work, audio-visual evangelism etc.

(2) With regard to the relationship between the Churches and Missions, it may be generally defined to take the following three stages in evangelistic work.

- (a) Evangelistic Policies under the autonomy of the Missions.
- (b) Evangelistic Policies in cooperation and coordination of the Missions and Churches.
- (c) Evangelistic Policies under Church autonomy with an amalgamation of the Missions.

Those Missions which opened their work in Japan in recent years are naturally in the first stage, but most of those Missions which were working for many years before the war have developed into the second or third states.

Immediately after World War II during which the Japanese Churches were placed in a most grave crisis, the missionaries returned to their posts and rendered their utmost service with remarkable results in helping in the reconstruction of the Churches and Schools. These are noteworthy facts in the history of the Christianity in Japan.

During that period, a new experiment in cooperation has been in operation between the Interboard Committee comprised of eight Mission Boards with its united front, and Kyodan. As an organ for cooperation between the Kyodan and the Interboard Committee, the Council of Cooperation was organized and a Special Committee on Cooperative Evangelism has been set up to determine the policies for evangelism, with mutual respect for the autonomy of each party while joining hands in practical evangelism.

This may be recorded as one special case of planning in the history of World Missions. Meanwhile, care should always be taken ever in this plan of cooperation, to see that evangelistic zeal shall govern methodology, to avoid becoming a mere money-distributing-agency infected with the capitalistic spirit. And when the Japanese Churches shall develop into the stage of full self-govern and self-support, then it may be said that real cooperation between home and abroad is possible.

(3) Just as our Churches need the cooperation of the missionaries, so also we have an obligation to participate in the enterprise of World Missions. At one time in the pre-war period the Japanese Churches opened Missionary work in Manchuria, China and the South-Sea Islands which was inevitably given up to our regret. However, Japanese Churches should bear responsibility in the future, at least, for the evangelization of the East Asian nations who share in a common Oriental cultural tradition, especially Japanese Christians who deeply feel moral responsibility for the tragic results of World War II, should plan to serve the East Asian Churches by cooperation in the spreading of the gospel.

(4) It is most clear that cooperative adjustment in the evangelistic field is urgently needed for efficient evangelism. For this purpose each Mission Board and the Church should establish a closer fellowship and try to avoid duplication and friction. Evangelistic efforts must be concentrated efficiently at the strategic points with mutual understanding and hearty cooperation. In view of this fact, the request from the Missionary Fellowship to N.C.C., to make a survey of the distribution of the forces on the whole field and to furnish the source materials for determining the comity policy is most timely.

Since we could not cover that field in our plan we hope it may be carried out following this research work. Again it is most desirable even in the overseas missionary enterprise that Foreign Mission Boards should also cooperate with our Churches.

(With regard to this policy of World Missions in the future, a special commission of the I.M.C. has been studying the Missionary Obligation of the Church and the Interim Report has been submitted by the F.M.C. of Japan)

IV. With Regard to the Policy on Educational Evangelism

~~The Christian Schools and the Churches are the two major wings of~~ evangelistic work in this country and both should concentrate their powers on the propagation of the Gospel. It is an obvious fact that the promotion of Christian education is the most efficient agency for evangelization of a country. In Japan especially there are factors which emphasize this fact.

(1) Fortunately in Japan the whole nation can write and read the same language and the compulsory public elementary education is given to all the children. So Christian education has a good opportunity to achieve its final goal. The Christian schools should endeavor to rise up equal to their mission under such circumstances. The Christian schools should uphold a high academic standard. However, they can not fulfil their function unless they strive for a unique position, different from the public government institutions. In view of this mission when there is the danger of losing this high standard on account of the financial difficulties, the Churches at home and abroad show an especially deep concern.

(2) In Japan where there is not a Christian tradition such as is held commonly in Europe and America, it seems not quite suitable to depend only on the revivalistic movement in evangelism, and so educational evangelism in the Churches is considered most effective in this country. It is very important to promote the Sunday School movement, youth activities and Bible Classes of various organizations. Again in Japan, where traditionally pagan religious feelings are deeply seated in the minds of ordinary people, it is a fundamental necessity to wipe out paganism and reorganize life by fostering a healthy true religious life through educational evangelism.

(3) One phase of educational evangelism is to enlighten and give insight to teachers and educational administrators in general, where there is a tendency to give a mistaken interpretation of the freedom of religion, so that some close the door to religious influence in the schools.

(4) In view of the very important position of earnest Christian teachers, not only in Christian Schools but also in public Schools, we shall look forward to the International Christian University for the training of such leaders.

V. On the Policies for Training of the Leaders

It has been a special feature of Japanese Christianity from the beginning that we have had outstanding leaders. There may be many necessary things relating to evangelism, but the qualifications of the most important problem.

(1) Culture of the Ministers.

It is a fact that the training of leaders is the most vital

problem for the evangelization of a nation, so much as the ministers of the gospel in Japan, where education is generally given, there should be provision made to train and produce a men of faith and knowledge or with leadership in the thought life, or well equipped with the administrative ability, or well qualified as a specialist along the line of special evangelism, such as Rural Evangelism, Laborers Evangelism, Laborers Evangelism and some such special line of works. There may be some cases where intellectual culture is not the primary need or rather, a point of close contact can be made when the minister of the gospel is down on a level with the people whom he serves. However, in general, it is required that he must be able to exercise leadership among the people.

(2) Living condition of the Ministers.

The ministers of the gospel should be always willing to lead a devoted life even in financial difficulties. Nevertheless, it must be true for them that results can not be expected if they are placed in too poor living conditions, for they also have to lead their economic life in the present social situation just as other people. The churches should pay special attention to this problem.

(3) Training of prominent Lay Leaders.

In the past decade, we were placed in a peculiar position. Ever since the Religious Organization Law was passed professional ministers were made to stand at the center of all the Christian activities, and it is with real regret that we see that the activities of the laity almost entirely ceased. In evangelism, the Lay Leaders witness to the Gospel, their generous giving with the spirit of stewardship, and many other things required of the Lay Leaders, will all help to develop Church life.

VI. Summary Statement on Recommendations with regard to the Occupational and Regional Evangelistic Policies

As to general evangelistic policies in Japan, we have to pay special attention to the classes of people who occupy the vast field.

(1) Rural Evangelism

First of all, for the farmers who comprise 60% of the whole population, special consideration must be given. As we have stated in the introduction, it has been assessed as a disability in evangelism that our churches hitherto have as members the intelligent classes. And it must be admitted and clearly recognized that rural evangelism has been very inadequate up to this time.

(2) Occupational Evangelism - especially evangelism for the laborers.

Along the lines of these special fields, which involve various social problems, the church should have to specially deep concern and plan to meet the needs. For the various special fields, the ministers and laity, having experience and knowledge, should be mobilized to reach those classes. The strategic policy is to arrange to locate the proper able personnel in positions where they can serve most effectively.

(3). On Special Evangelism

In accordance with the spirit of the ministry of our Lord, our Churches should plan to establish the evangelistic policies through the practice of love. Therefore we wish to recommend a few special methods of evangelism. One such is Hospital evangelism. It might be considered as one of the strategic points where all the evangelistic forces should be concentrated. It is quite natural that the patients, feeling their physical weakness, should desire for power for strengthening the soul. And we recommend hospital evangelism in general and, at the same time, especially the evangelism in Christian hospitals and dispensaries. It is considered most efficient and expedient that the Christian doctors and nurses should press on the evangelistic front line, as the embodiment of the gospel of love, and in view of this opportunity, we wish to recommend that our Churches also adopt Deaconess system of the as it has been developed in Germany. It is especially necessary to practice Christian love in all social welfare, so that Christian social workers and Christian social welfare institutions may be filled with Christian life and spirit. We are happy our Japanese government, also in accord with the modern social state is encouraging social welfare institutions. It is an obvious fact, that Christian institutions filled with genuine love and passion for souls, are placed in a most important position. The results achieved by love and faith surpass those of mere machinery or facilities in social welfare work. And so it is clear that social welfare work is vitalized by the soul-saving evangelistic movement.

(4) Evangelism among senior and junior young people

It is a fact made plain by research that in the evangelism of youth the most vital and fruitful work is done among the college group. There is urgent need for the Churches to develop the best method for reaching them. Evangelism among student classes has been most efficient and has served a very important role in developing national leaders. This is an historical fact recorded in the Church History of Japan, and also revealed in the outstanding personal leadership in successive generations. Again in view of the hopeful fact that the majority of the generations of the young student classes - young people of the are subject to temptation and trials in thought and life - it is considered the most heavy responsibility of the Churches at present.

(5) Christianizing woman and the Home

The moral degradation and confusion of our nation in this postwar period, especially that of the family caused by the collapse of family morality, call loudly for the necessity of Christianizing the home and family life. Our Churches must be responsible for injecting Christian home ideals and principles into our nation at this critical time when the traditional family system is fundamentally destroyed. For this purpose, it is fundamentally necessary to introduce the Gospel to every family of the nation. The N.C.C. is trying to carry on the Home and Family Life Movement in response to such a demand of the day, and we keenly feel the need and wish to recommend that all the churches should cooperate in the earnest promotion of this movement in order to accomplish this purpose.

III. Objectification of the Evangelistic Policies

We should adopt the most effective methods of evangelism fitted to the present social situation and the trends of the day, with economy in both personnel and fund. This is the reason why we feel necessary

to deal in brief summary with several special strategic methods in evangelism.

(1) Layman's service for Evangelism

It will mean a great sacrifice, indeed, under the present social circumstances, for the laity to offer time and energy, in order to participate in evangelism. Nevertheless the Church and the pastor should try their best to encourage the laity to use their available time and effort. We shall expect here, in connection with this, that special emphasis should be placed on the close communion of the laity.

(2) Practical application of the Visitation Evangelism

The best method for the laymen's evangelistic movement, is Visitation Evangelism. If we will adopt this method faithfully with thorough preparation and burning zeal it will enrich the inner life of the Churches and serve as the best means to reach the family members. In regard to Visitation Evangelism, a pamphlet or manual and some apparatus for the practice of this method are provided by the N.C.C. to be used by the Churches.

(3) Promotion of Christian Literature

Hitherto in Japan the publication and distribution of the Bible played important in evangelistic work, and this movement should be promoted more than ever before. In Japan where the publication of books, magazines, news papers etc. is very active, it is a most promising method for evangelism to provide the spiritual food widely among the nation, making the best use of these opportunities and facilities. The distribution of the Bible, promotion of Christian publishing work, training of Christian writers, and the movement for producing good books, in response to the request from within and without the churches, are being considered as a very important wing of the evangelistic work among our people. The Christian Literature Department of the N.C.C., in close cooperation with the Churches of the different communions, should vitalize this activity with good plans and program.

(4) Promotion of the Audio-Visual Evangelism

In these days when the miracles of electric waves are working wonderful thing, it is the most efficient means to send out the word of God on the electric wave motion. From lantern picture to movies, from abroad casting to television, the work is advancing day by day. It has been proven scientifically and psychologically to be efficient in conveying the word of God widely and deeply. Our Churches should endeavor to keep up with the remarkable progress in this field utilizing all of these up-to-date apparatus in the propagation of the gospel. A working section of the N.C.C. responsible for the study and application of these measures will make recommendation to the Churches throughout the country.

(5) Re-arrangement of the Evangelistic Facilities

Our Churches in Japan richly blessed with such a rare good opportunity are striving to enlarge the evangelistic field in this post-war period. Meanwhile, what is felt as a great hindrance is

that the arrangement on the field is not yet fixed. As it is shown in the report on research work, there is dire need for well equipped evangelistic facilities, and it was revealed that Church buildings are parsonages are most urgently needed. It is imperative to adopt this policy under a long range program, especially in the difficult field of evangelistic work.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

For the practical application of these fundamental policies for evangelism established upon the factual data and thus far stated in summary, the Churches together with other Christian agencies such as Christian schools, Bible Society and others, all realizing the duty and privilege of the fundamental mission of proclaiming the gospel, must set as the goal of common purpose the strengthening and building up of the "Church which is the Body of Christ". It is obvious that the Churches are the strategic bases for the evangelization of Japan, for without the growth and development of the Churches, the task of Christianizing Japan will never be accomplished. All the policies on evangelism must necessarily concentrate at this one central point, and wish to make it our concluding statement that all the policies recommended in this report, must converge on the "Church as the Body of Christ".

EPILOGUE

We have managed to submit the report and recommendations thus far, as the results of our study and investigation on so many items related to the fundamental policies for evangelization of Japan. Meanwhile we regret that they will not be able to give satisfaction as the response to the expectation of the constituencies, realizing ourselves the inadequacy of the work, and we must apologize that owing to the limited personnel and funds, the committee could have no freedom to carry out what they wished to do, and we must admit that there may be some important omission or lack of through-going research in the items on study.

We wish by some means or other those items should be studied so as to supplement this report, and we shall point out those items as follows:

(1) Research on the Financial Problem of the Church

It is no doubt necessary to make the study on the fundamental survey of finance in relation to the Evangelistic Policies, especially in Japan, in order to establish the policy for self-support and autonomy. The financial policies must be fully investigated and reported, and we deeply regret that we could not attend to that study in this report.

(2) Research on the Present Situation of the Japanese Churches

There have been some source materials for reference on the study of the growth of Protestant Christianity in Japan. However, at the time of a great change of the situation in pre and post-war period, it is necessary to gather the materials and complete the sources, and we must apologize again that we could not attend to this very important work.

(3) Research on the distribution of the Christian forces or division of the field

It has been hitherto earnestly requested that a comprehensive survey of the field be made to show clearly the distribution of the forces of the Churches and Missions on the field. This work has not been done. The Missionary Fellowship in their Summer Conference in 1951 requested the M.S.C. to undertake this survey work. This responsibility was not committed to our Committee, but realizing its importance for the practical application of this report to the field work, we wish to recommend the urgent need for this survey.

Now the days are drawing near to the close of the first century since the Protestant Missions were opened in Japan, and we are deeply conscious that we are placed in the position of endeavoring to permeate the nation with the gospel.

Thus we are now on the stage of the Apostolic age and therefore we feel a special significance in submitting this report and recommendations for the strategic policies on Evangelism, contemplating what wonderful fruits might be brought forth by adopting these policies in the actual work on the field.

The Committee while admitting that the report and recommendations may be far from adequate presented in this form yet it is their prayer that they may serve the Churches and contribute to the evangelization of our beloved nation, and it is our constant prayer in submitting this report that "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah", may be richly poured upon our fellowworkers, so that the eighty four million souls of our nation may be saved, and the nation shall become the Kingdom of Christ on earth.

